

**Boylston Boylston Finance Committee  
Budget Hearings Meetings**

February 23, 2022  
Via Zoom

**Attendees:** Eric Brose, Karen McGahie, Greg Cusimano, Howard Drobner David Butler, Steph Miczek, Joe Flanagan, John Annunziata, Erica Hout, Prashant Bhabhalia, Brad Barker, Maria Zapp, Jean Therriault, Susan Therriault, Cody Thomasian, Amy Gothing, Dennis Goguen

**Meeting Notes:**

- Fire Department – Chief Joe Flanagan
  - New engine
    - New engine has been ordered, but looking to be 2 years out before we get it, so not needed in this year's budget and probably not next years.
    - Lease company won't provide financing numbers until we get closer
    - Previous truck was \$125k per year for 5 years, and this truck will be about \$150k cheaper than the previous one
    - Total cost expected to be about \$750k, but could cost the town significantly less depending on in-kind donations received (such as from new developments in town)
  - Increase in staffing request
    - Looking to increase staffing; having a very hard time filling weekend shifts due to staffing issues.
    - Increased the hourly rate and provided a stipend, but this hasn't been enough.
    - Requesting to add 2 new staff members. Budget includes the 2 new employees from last year, and this is in addition to those 2.
    - \$100,179 is a good starting point for the budget for the two new hires.
    - With two additional resources, we could eliminate the ambulance stipend for weekend shifts, reduce the 5-9pm shift in half, and estimate at ½ of this year's projected overtime actuals.
  - General
    - Overall call volume has been up. 107 calls in January, and close to that in February already. Weekend shift used to be very slow.
    - Currently at about \$14k for the overtime budget, some of this money will be returned as it's due to Covid related work. Likely to come back next FY.
- Library – Brad Barker, Erica Hout (library director), Prashant Bhabhalia, Maria Zapp, Jean Therriault, Susan Therriault
  - Looking for a 17% year over year increase, approximately \$45k
  - Expenses
    - Adjusting for higher electric usage, accounting for biannual lift inspection.

- Increase in audio visual, books and periodical costs to be 19.5% of the overall library budget as required by MBLC
    - Library programs are not funded by the town but through donations
  - Salaries
    - Believe this is a crisis situation and the proposal includes adjustments to get employees to the minimally competitive level as compared to other towns
    - Also dealing with the increase in minimum wage across the state
    - Boylston pays lower salaries than all of the surrounding towns, even those comparable in size. Boylston will fall further behind as the other towns plan to increase wages to attract good talent.
    - Have had a significant number of employees leave for better paying opportunities in the past few years; this has happened at all levels.
  - General
    - Library was originally planning to submit a warrant article for additional funds for library repairs, but have decided not to do that in order to allow the town to focus on the salary issues
- Police Department – Chief John Annunziata and Cody Thomasian
  - Increase in staffing request
    - Requesting two additional officers
    - Current overtime budget is \$60k, currently \$32k over that budget. With current staffing, there is no way to cut down on overtime. Expecting this to come in at about \$120k for the year
    - Another officer just went out on IOD. Historically have at least one officer out on IOD per year.
    - Lately detectives have been doing investigations on overtime because they are needed to fill regular shifts.
    - Salary for new officers would be \$60-\$65k
  - New vehicle request
    - Requesting a new police vehicle
    - \$60k cost, complete outfitted
    - Saving money on vehicles thanks to highway department doing maintenance
  - Warrant articles:
    - Technology
      - \$65k total for new PC's, wireless upgrade, wires upgrade, server upgrade
      - Howard to look into if servers could be shared between the town hall and police department to save some costs
    - Police Reform
      - New mandates requiring changes to operations. Need to go down the path for accreditation to meet state requirements (which is a 1.5 year process)

- Estimate for this pending, but may include things like updates/enhancements to evidence management, records management, and fire suppression systems.
- Office Furniture
  - \$20k in new furniture for the Chief, Assistant, and Training Room
  - Existing furniture is hand-me-downs from 20 years ago and is extremely worn out (regularly snags and ruins clothing)
  - By updating the training room, hoping to host trainings in the future which would save the department money with free training attendance for some officers and potential savings for overtime
- General Budget
  - Requesting an increase for the Executive Assistant to the top of her grade, as she's been with the department for 20+ years and has not yet maxed out
  - Union negotiations ongoing; may not be done in time for the warrant
  - Tasers – need to be included in the budget, \$12,615 per year for 4 years
    - This does not remove/replace the taser certification line item
- Council On Aging – Dennis Goguen, Amy Gothing
  - Increase for hours/salaries
    - Requesting an increase for the coordinator to 32 hours, but doesn't need to happen this year
    - Requesting increases in salaries for outreach coordinator, van scheduler, and van drivers
      - Van scheduler in particular needs an increase as they fill in when the drivers are unavailable yet makes less than the drivers
    - Noted that salaries are lower than surrounding towns
  - General
    - Added \$500 to overall program costs
- Vote to adjourn
  - Greg made a motion to approve; Dave seconded. All approved.